



Education Committee

HB 6881 An Act Concerning Various Revisions to the Education Statutes Related to Educator Compensation and Paraeducators

Good afternoon Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Ranking Members, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Michelle Mania and I am President of AFSCME Council 4, Local 1996 which represents paraeducators in the Stonington School District. I have also worked as a paraeducator in the Stonington School district for 4 years. I currently am part-time and work 29 hours a week.

Paras work closely with students and help them succeed through one on one help or supporting their IEPs. However, even though we are providing important educational support for students our wages do not reflect the value we bring to the classroom. I work as a second set of eyes for the teacher and work closely with them to ensure student success. We do important work in the classroom that deserves to be valued. I was a teacher in adult education for 17 years and I would make more money on unemployment than what I currently make. Additionally, we only get 2 paid holidays a year which means for 19 other holidays on the school calendar we are losing a day of pay.

HB 6881 addresses this need by improving para pay for a livable wage and making us 12 month employees instead of 10. Currently, we can't collect unemployment in the summer because we have a reasonable expectation of a job when the school year starts. Paras deserve to be paid a living wage and valued for our contributions to student success. Low pay for paras contributes to over 1,300 vacancies for paras across Connecticut including numerous ones in Stonington.

I urge support for HB 6881 and ask the committee to pass this bill. Thank you.